

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 05853 281048Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5704

S E C R E T JIDDA 5853

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, US

SUBJECT: LOA'S FOR FMS MILITARY SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF: STATE 213618

1. IN ANSWER TO THE SECRETARY'S REQUEST FOR MY JUDGMENT AS TO CURRENT "FLEXIBILITY" WITH SAUDIS ON SIDEWINDER/MAVERICK SALES, I REGRET TO SAY I CANNOT DISCERN ANYTHING RESEMBLING FLEXIBILITY IN THAT MATTER AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS, TO PUT IT MILDLY, VERY UPSET WHEN I CARRIED OUT INSTRUCTIONS TO TELL HIM WE WERE CUTTING SIDEWINDER FIGURE FROM 2000 TO 1000. IF NO OTHER FACTORS WERE IN PLAY I MIGHT CONSIDER THE CUTS IN SIDEWINDERS FROM 1000 TO 800 AND IN MARVERICKS FROM 1500 TO 800 (TO CITE YOUR EXAMPLES) AS MANAGEABLE, PROVIDED WE INTEND TO FULFILL TOTAL TRANSACTION. IN THE CONTEXT OF BOYCOTT LEGISLATION AND OPEC PRESSURES THE MISSILE PROBLEM TAKES ON A MUCH MORE SERIOUS ASPECT.

2. I AM ASSURED THAT THE SAUDI LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDS THE SECRETARY'S PROBLEM AND THEY FEEL THEY HAVE MADE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO EASING IT. NEW CUTS IN WHAT WE ARE PREPARED TO DELIVER, THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE FUTURE, AND THE EFFECT ANTI-BOYCOTT LEGISLATION MAY HAVE ON THEIR DEVELOPMENT PLAN COULD EASILY CHANGE SAUDI PREFERENCE FOR MAINTAINING PRESENT OIL PRICES AND PRODUCTION TO SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT ALONG LINES NOW ADVOCATED BY VENEZUELA, IRAN, IRAQ, ALGERIA, ETC.

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3. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE SAUDIS ARE FOLLOWING OUR ACTIONS ON

THESE ARMS SALES CLOSELY. THE MAIN HEADLINE IN TODAY'S PAPER READS "US TO REDUCE SALE OF MISSILES TO SAUDI ARABIA." THE ARTICLE SAYS THE ADMINISTRATION IS PREPARED TO CUT SIDEWINDER SALES TO 1000 FROM 2000; AND THAT CONGRESSIONAL SOURCES BELIEVE THE ADMINISTRATION CAN BE PUSHED BACK TO A 750 FIGURE. IT ADDS YOU ASSURED THE CONGRESS SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NOT RECEIVE THE MOST ADVANCED VERSION OF THESE MISSILES(SEPTTEL).

4. SO "FLEXIBILITY" IS NOT EXACTLY THE WORD. WE APPEAR TO BE HEADING FOR A "CRUNCH" WHICH WOULD BE HIGHLY DAMAGING TO U.S. INTERESTS.

PORTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, MILITARY SALES, MISSILES, SIDEWINDERS, BOYCOTTS, US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976JIDDA05853
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850071-2591, N760006-0540
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760810/aaaaaicx.tel
Line Count: 73
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 76 STATE 213618
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 JUN 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <02 NOV 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOA'S FOR FMS MILITARY SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PREL, SA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006